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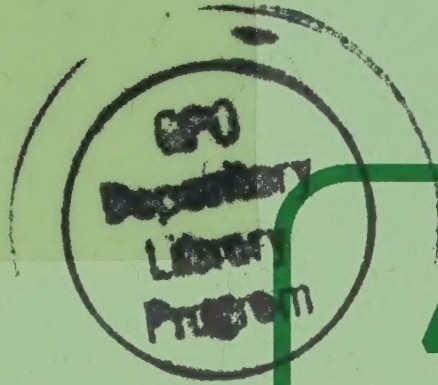
# DAY HIKES

## TRAIL GUIDE

SPRUCE KNOB—  
SENECA ROCKS  
NATIONAL  
RECREATION  
AREA

MONONGAHELA  
NATIONAL  
FOREST

UNITED  
STATES  
DEPARTMENT  
OF  
AGRICULTURE



AMERICA'S  
GREAT  
OUTDOORS





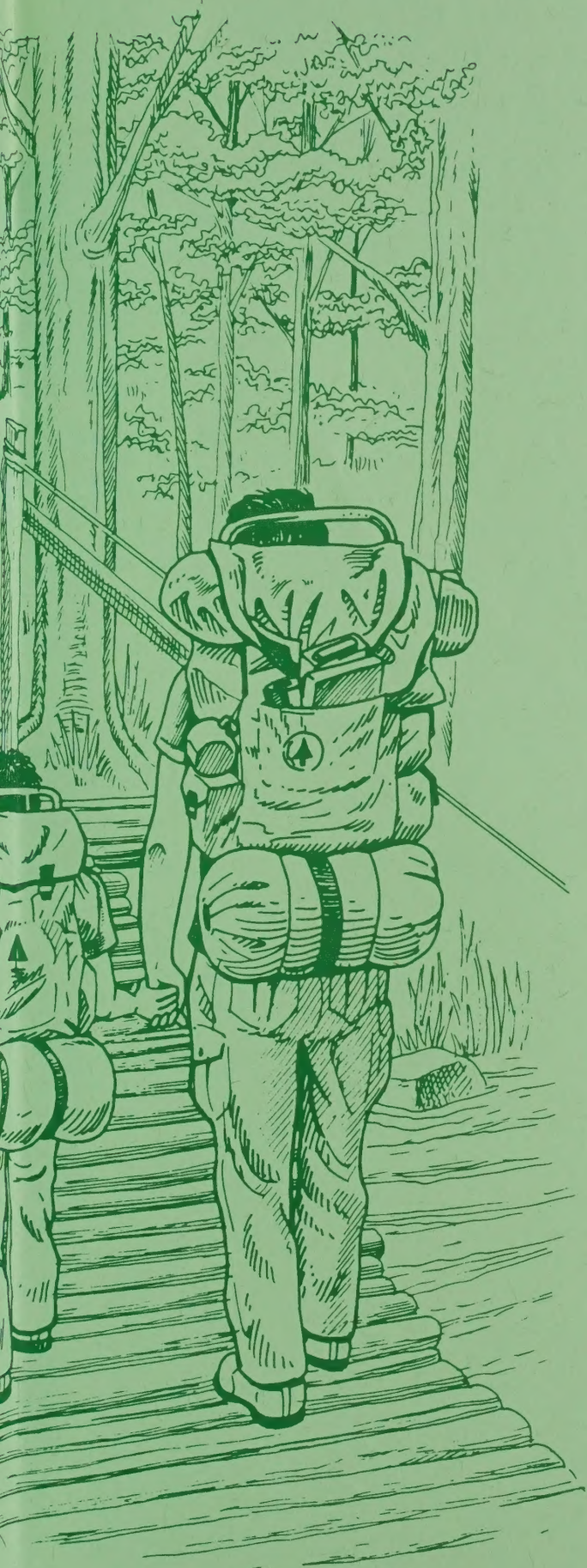


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CATALOGING PREP.







## MULTIPLE USES

Visitors to the National Recreation Area are likely to see areas where the Monongahela National Forest is managing the forest's resources in a variety of ways. Small tracts of timber are cut, not only to provide hardwood lumber, but also to create openings to benefit wildlife and create vistas. Cattle, sheep and horses grazing on tracts leased to local farmers provide meat and wool and keep those areas open, preserving the open scenic qualities and grasses for wildlife. In other areas, hay or corn is grown on leased areas to preserve the rural agricultural landscape. Rangers at the Seneca Rocks Visitor Center or Petersburg Ranger Station would be pleased to explain any of these or other activities you see.

## MAPS AND GUIDES

Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide by Bruce Sundquist and Allen deHart, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.

Maps and guides are available for sale at the Potomac Ranger Station and the Seneca Rocks Visitor Center.

This brochure is available  
in large print at the  
Potomac Ranger Station and  
Seneca Rocks Visitor Center.





Do you only have a day to spend hiking in the Potomac Highlands? Here are some suggestions that highlight the area's scenic beauty, while only covering short to moderate distances....

## SENECA ROCKS AREA

**Seneca Rocks Hiking Trail** is a **1.3 mile** trail ascending nearly 900 feet from the North Fork River to an observation deck just below the top of the rocks. This vantage point offers a splendid view of the North Fork River valley below and the Allegheny Mountains to the west. The trail is a wide gravel path where switchbacks and steps help to ease the steep grades. Benches provide resting spots along the way. People of all ages have hiked this trail. It begins from the parking lot at the Seneca Rocks Visitor Center.



## DOLLY SODS AREA





**South Prong Trail - Forest Road 70** is a 4-1/2 mile loop. Begin at the South Prong trailhead located approximately 1/2 mile south of the Dolly Sods Picnic Area on Forest Road 19. Follow this rocky trail through blueberries and bogs along the ridge. Nice views to the east and south can be seen before the trail drops steeply down to Forest Road 70 at which point one should turn right and follow Forest Road 70 back to Forest Road 19. Turn right onto Forest Road 19 and walk 1/8 mile back to your car. The tread is rocky on South Prong Trail. FR 70 is closed to motorized vehicles from March 1 -September 30.

### SMOKE HOLE AREA

**Big Bend Loop Trail** is a 1 mile trail that encircles the Big Bend Campground. From the day use parking lot, it climbs the hill above the campground offering views of the surrounding canyon walls. The trail then drops back down to the South Branch River where it follows the bend in the river around the campground and returns to the day use parking area. Before reaching the parking lot, one can see a chimney which is all that remains of the old Ketterman Post Office. This is a nice trail for viewing wildflowers in the spring and early summer and provides easy access to the river.





**Seneca Creek - Allegheny Mountain Loop** is a **6 mile** loop that follows old railroad grades and logging roads through meadows, northern hardwood forests, and along Seneca Creek. Begin at the Seneca Creek Trailhead on Forest Road 112. Follow the trail to Tom Lick Trail which leads up the mountain passing through a wildlife clearing where quiet hikers might see deer. At the top of the mountain, turn right onto Allegheny Mountain Trail (a road closed to public traffic). Follow this trail approximately one mile to a big clearing where Swallow Rock Trail crosses the Allegheny Mountain Trail. Turn right onto Swallow Rock Trail which leads through a northern hardwood forest and crosses a small creek on its way to Seneca Creek. Upon reaching Seneca Creek, ford the creek and turn right to follow the trail upstream. Following the trail in this direction, the hiker has better views of the cascading creek. There is one gradual ascent and one fairly steep descent when following the loop as described.

**Gatewood Trail** is a **2 mile** loop trail with several short, steep sections. It leads the hiker through a red pine plantation, northern hardwood forest, open pastures, and along the banks of Big Run where signs of beaver can be seen. Spruce Knob is visible from the pasture. This trail has two access points - one trailhead is located on Sawmill Run Road where the road crosses Big Run; the other trailhead is located on Forest Road 112 a quarter mile southwest of the intersection of Forest Road 112 and Forest Road 1. The trail can also be accessed by the Short Trail which begins across the road from the entrance to the Spruce Knob Lake Campground. The Short Trail is a 1/2 mile.

**Whispering Spruce Trail** is a **1/2 mile**

**Boar's Nest - South Prong Loop Trail** is **6 miles**. These two trails are connected by Forest Road 70 to form a long day hike. It can be hiked in either direction and these two trails begin at the same place on Forest Road 19 between Laneville and Forest Road 70. The elevation gain on this loop is 1,500 feet and rocky, so this route is not for the faint at heart. The trail crosses streams and bogs so be prepared to get your feet wet. Views of Dolly Sods Wilderness can be seen from Boar's Nest Trail. FR 70 is closed to public motorized vehicles from March 1 - September 30. This trail can be difficult to follow.

**Northland Loop Trail** is a **1/2 mile** loop trail with interpretive nature signs along the way. The trail begins from Forest Road 75 in the Dolly Sods Scenic Area approximately 1/2 mile south of the Red Creek Campground. This trail meanders through the heath barrens to a bog and circles back to the road passing through a spruce/hemlock stand. The tread is very rocky and surrounded by dense rhododendron and laurel thickets.





**South Branch Trail** is a **3-1/2 mile** loop trail beginning at the Smoke Hole Picnic Area on County Road 2. From the parking lot, walk along the base of the hill through the picnic area. The beginning of the trail is a mowed path leading downstream from the picnic area. The trail crosses a gas pipeline on a small footbridge and then continues following the South Branch River downstream. Beware of a rocky tread in places. Eventually, the trail ascends above the river and comes to a road where blue blazes lead the hiker uphill into an open meadow dotted with cedar trees. Signs of an old homestead can be seen throughout the meadow. Several old roads come into the meadow so be sure to follow the blue blazes and arrows marking the trail. When the trail turns off the road, it becomes a footpath through a dense pine/cedar forest. The trail stays high on the mountainside for a mile or more before descending steeply back down to the picnic area. The terrain and vegetation are varied on this hike and nice views of North Fork Mountain can be seen along the trail.

### **SPRUCE KNOB AREA**

**Big Run - Allegheny Mountain Loop** is a **7 mile** loop that follows clear mountain streams through hardwood forests and open meadows. Beaver signs can be seen along the way. The two steep grades are short in length. Begin at the Big Run Trailhead on County Road 29 south of Whitmer. Follow Big Run Trail up to Allegheny Mountain Trailhead. From this point follow Allegheny Mountain Trail almost 2-1/2 miles to its junction with North Prong Trail. Turn left onto North Prong Trail which leads through an open meadow and into a forest following the North Prong back to Big Run.

loop trail encircling the Spruce Knob tower. Visitors can feel what life is like for the plants and animals living above 4,000 feet in the Allegheny Mountains. This nature trail winds through windblown rock where one can feel the sharp west wind blow. It then leads out to a point where giant boulders are scattered through an open field. Exceptional views to the east and west are seen beyond. From this point the trail enters a thick spruce patch protected from the wind where visitors can peek through breaks in the trees to see the North Fork valley below and the mountains fading into Virginia. Beyond the stand of spruce the trail forks - left leads back to the tower and right leads through a blueberry patch speckled with azalea bushes before reaching the parking lot. The path is wide and gravelled.







## HIKING HINTS

- Trails are marked with blue blazes.
- Plan your trip so you won't get caught in the dark.
- Topographical maps are recommended for the longer day hikes.
- Dress for the weather! Be prepared for sudden changes.
- Wear proper footgear.
- Bring drinking water; otherwise, treat water from streams and springs before drinking to kill harmful pathogens.
- During hunting seasons, hikers are urged to dress in high visibility clothing.
- Though mountain bikes and horses are allowed on all these trails, encounters with them are few and evidence of their use is rare.



## LEAVE NO TRACE!

- Make it hard for others to see and hear you.
- Bury all human waste at least 200 feet from water and trails..

**PACK IT IN, PACK IT OUT!**





## EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

State Police (Elkins)	637-0200
State Police (Franklin)	358-2200
Randolph County Sheriff	636-2000
Pendleton County Sheriff	358-2214
Grant Cty Emergency Dispatch	257-1212

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If you need more information,  
please contact:

Potomac Ranger District  
U.S. Forest Service  
Route 3, Box 240  
Petersburg, WV 26847  
Phone (304) 257-4488 (Voice/TTY)  
(weekdays only)

Seneca Rocks Visitor Center  
U.S. Forest Service  
P.O. Box 13  
Seneca Rocks, WV 26884  
Phone (304) 567-2827 (Voice/TTY)  
(daily, except winter)

